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FORCES IN SOUTH VIETNAM

19 September 1966

COMMUNIST FORCES

MAIN FORCE	CONFIRMED			UNCONFIRMED		PERSONNEL TOTALS
	Combat Personnel	Combat Battalions	Support Personnel	Combat Personnel	Combat Battalions	
VIET CONG	63,164	90	17,553	1,850	9	82,567
PAVN	46,300	78	---	1,200	9	47,500
Sub Total	109,464	168	17,553	3,050	18	130,067
PARAMILITARY	103,600	below battalion level	40,000	16,400	--	160,000
TOTALS	213,064	168	57,553	19,450	18	290,067

NOTES: More than one half of the 168 confirmed combat battalions listed are now organized into 32 regiments, of which 13 are Viet Cong and 19 are PAVN. In addition, most of these regiments are suspected [REDACTED] 25X1D 25X1D

The PAVN personnel listed above are those organized only in the corresponding PAVN units. Those North Vietnamese organized in Viet Cong units are listed as Viet Cong personnel.

The 40,000 paramilitary support personnel are armed political cadres.

ALLIED FORCES

COUNTRY	GROUND FORCE BATTALIONS				AIR SQUADRONS, COMPANIES			PERSONNEL TOTALS
	Infantry	Artillery	Armor, Engineer		Strike Helicopter	Other	Other	
			Other	Support				
REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM								
Army	157	26		63	--	--	--	280,422
Navy	---	---		---	---	---	---	16,204
Marines	5	---		---	---	---	---	6,870
Air Force	---	---		---	6	4	7	13,906
Paramilitary	---	---		---	---	---	---	388,497
RVN	---	---		---	---	---	---	---
TOTALS	162	26		63	6	4	7	705,899
UNITED STATES								
Army	42	26 2/3		20	--	48	21	189,815
Marines	18	9 1/3		12	8	11	3	54,904*
Air Force	---	---		---	33	---	24	44,279
Navy	---	---		---	16	---	2	21,585*
Coast Guard	---	---		---	---	---	---	442
US	---	---		---	---	---	---	---
TOTALS	60	36		32	57	59	50	311,025
OTHER FREE WORLD								
Republic of Korea	9	5		2 1/3	--	--	--	39,747
Australia	1	1/3		---	---	---	---	4,378
New Zealand	---	1/3		---	---	---	---	149
Philippines	---	---		---	---	---	---	199
(Psychological warfare, civil action, and medical teams)								
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*US naval air and marine units afloat are included in unit listings above, but not in personnel total.

Battalion strengths: VC - from 250-700; PAVN - 400-500; ARVN - 350-400; US Army - 800-900 (Airmobile Division - 100-150)

12 September 1966

25X1C

DCI BRIEFING FOR

VIETNAM

- I. The Free World forces in South Vietnam are continuing to maintain the pressure on the Communists which has so far prevented the development of a major Viet Cong offensive during the monsoon season.
 - A. We have been able to launch a series of successful "spoiling operations"--- attacks in force into areas where the enemy has been trying to concentrate forces for large-scale actions.
 1. These operations have not only kept the Communists off balance, but have inflicted heavy casualties.
 2. One good example was Operation Hastings, carried out in July in northern Quang Tri Province. U. S. Marines and South Vietnamese regulars attacked units of the 324-B Division of the North Vietnamese army, which had infiltrated directly across the Demilitarized Zone.

- 1 -

3. In an operation continuing from July 7 to August 2, the allied forces killed 882 men--by actual body count--and many more were probably killed by tactical air strikes. The North Vietnamese units were forced back into the demilitarized zone.

B. The North Vietnamese division involved in HASTINGS---324B--has a strength of about 9,000 men, so it was far from being destroyed. As a matter of fact, it resumed activity in mid-August, and is again being attacked in a follow-on operation, called PRAIRIE.

1. Through yesterday, another 734 enemy dead had been counted in PRAIRIE
2. These major spoiling operations are good examples of how the allied tactics have been able to keep the Communists off balance, so that they cannot launch major offensives.
3. The spoiling operations have been successful largely because the allied forces have such great mobility, good air support, and constantly improving intelligence on enemy dispositions and movements.

C. In most of the encounters this spring and summer, the enemy has not chosen to stand and fight as he did in the Ia Drang Valley battle last november, in the highlands of Pleiku Province.

1. We have to search him out. In addition to the big sweeps, the allied forces maintain the pressure with 10 to 15 operations at all times in battalion strength or more.
2. These probes had led to a number of small but sharp engagements. ~~The~~

II. As a result, the Communists have been taking heavy casualties, with an average of about 1,550 killed per week. ~~The~~ body count for the first eight months this year already exceeds the 35,400 killed in 1965.

A. The rate of infiltration from North Vietnam, however, is also greatly increased. Apparently the Viet Cong are also calling up a larger number of their regional guerrillas for the main forces.

1. The Communist main force now has more than 106,000 men in combat units--158 battalions. 11
2. This includes about 50,000 men in regular formations of the North Vietnamese army.

3. We believe that there are 19 North Vietnamese and 13 Viet Cong regiments.

B. Many of the 158 enemy battalions operate as independent battalions, or in even smaller units.

25X1D

25X1D

C. This means that the enemy retains a significant capability for large-scale operations, as well as a high level of small actions against isolated outposts and smaller allied units.

D. There is no indication that there has been any radical change in the overall Communist strategy. That is to attack in force wherever the terrain and other factors are strongly to their advantage, and where they believe they can achieve victories at the smallest possible cost.

(SOUTH VIETNAMESE POLITICAL SITUATION)

I. As for the political situation in South Vietnam, the military government of Premier Ky continues to maintain the relatively stable position it has enjoyed since overcoming the Buddhist "struggle"

S E C R E T

movement last spring.

- A. Most recently, of course, the election held last Sunday has been the center of attention. The outcome appears likely to enhance the stability of the regime.
- B. The identities of those elected to the constituent assembly have no particular bearing; the significant facts are that more than five and a quarter million people registered to vote, and that more than 80 percent of those registered actually cast their ballots.
- C. This would appear to be an excellent performance in the light of a call by the more militant of the Buddhist leaders for a boycott, and threats by the Viet Cong against candidates and voters.
 - 1. Incidents of terrorism and harassment by the Viet Cong were five times as high on Election Day as on a normal day. In general, however, the voting took place without serious incidents.
 - 2. There may have been some padding of the rural vote, but observers throughout the country found no evidence of official coercion, fraud, or other rigging.

S E C R E T

- D. The government, of course, made an all-out security effort to prevent Viet Cong disruption of the election, but the voter turn-out at least indicates that in areas where there is a government presence there is less fear of the Viet Cong, and probably less sympathy for their cause.
- E. As for the failure of the Buddhist appeal for the faithful to abstain from voting, it points up the weakness in secular matters of the militants around Thich Tri Quang who at present control the policies of the Buddhist Institute.
- II. There are some internal strains within the military government which might ultimately cause trouble as the time approaches for the installation of an elected government under the new constitution now to be drafted.
- A. These strains, however, in large part do not reflect a refusal by the military to go along with the constitutional process.
1. They reflect instead the rivalry of some senior military commanders with Premier Ky, and their fear that Ky might dismiss them.

2. There have also been indications of some complaints by some junior officers objecting to alleged corruption of their superiors.
3. None of these strains, however, appear so serious or so widespread as to threaten Ky's position at this time.

(NORTH VIETNAM)

- I. As for North Vietnam, the Hanoi leaders appear as determined as ever to continue the war. They have rejected all attempts by third parties to get negotiations started.
- II. The level of air strikes against North Vietnam has expanded considerably during the past several months.
 - A. The major targets are North Vietnamese lines of communication, and their POL facilities.
 - B. The North Vietnamese continue, however, to be able to move enough men and supplies through Laos into South Vietnam to maintain the operations of the Communists in the South.
- III. We have obtained more and more evidence in recent months of the extent to which Hanoi is running-- and taking part in--the war in South Vietnam.
 - A. Captured documents and the interrogation of prisoners have now identified the man who

is running the entire Communist war effort in South Vietnam. He is Nguyen Chi Thanh, (*NNGWEEN CHEE TAHN) a politburo member of the North Vietnamese Communist Party.

1. Thanh is a general in the North Vietnamese Army, and has been its political commissar. He left North Vietnam to take over operations in the South early in 1965.
2. His two principal deputies are also both generals in the North Vietnamese Army, and members of the central committee of the North Vietnamese Communist Party.
3. One of them, the military deputy, is Tran Van Tra, who used to be deputy chief of staff of the North Vietnamese Army. Now, under the alias of Tran Nam Trung, he is listed as chief of the military affairs committee of the so-called National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam.
4. The deputy who runs the Communist political organization in South Vietnam is General Tran Do.

B. That is a good sample of how little identification

the National Front for the Liberation
of South Vietnam actually has with the
people of South Vietnam.

(STATISTICS, SAMs in DRV)

From CS/Pres Vietnam Book)

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20 September 1966

MAHON BRIEFING

COMMUNIST CHINA

- I. The internal political scene in Communist China has been marked by turmoil and disarray for many months now. All of the indications are that the situation is still unstable, and there may be further upheavals.
 - A. For the past month, mobs of rampaging teenagers of the so-called Red Guard have kept the country in a state of disorder
 1. They have been roaming the streets of all major Chinese cities, harassing suspected enemies of the regime and occasionally beating them up.
 2. There have been a few reports of extensive violence and bloodshed, but for the most part the Red Guards appear to be a disciplined and well-controlled organization.
 3. In the past week or so, their activities have subsided somewhat.
 - B. The destructive antics of these teenagers have tended to divert public attention from far more important developments

within the party leadership. It appears to us that the top power structure of the party is undergoing its most massive shake-up in the history of the Chinese Communist regime.

(BRIEFING BOARD, CHICOM LEADERSHIP)

II. Massive demonstrations in Peking on the 18th and 31st of August and on September 15th featured what appears to be a new line-up of the party's top policy-making body, the politburo.

A. Mao Tse-tung still dominates the leadership, but Defense Minister Lin Piao has taken the place of Mao's long-time deputy, Liu Shao-chi.

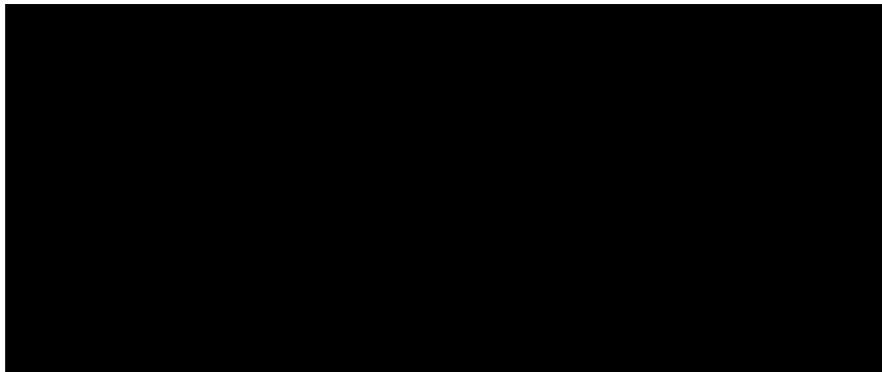
1. Liu has been the titular chief of state. There has been no announcement that he has lost that position, and he is still a member of the politburo, but he has been dropped ignominiously from second to eighth place.

B. As for Mao himself, we are not sure just how much control he still exercises over day-to-day events, or how long he will last.

III. Mao's new deputy, Lin Piao, is not in much better health.

A. Lin is one of the youngest men in the politburo at 59, but he has been ill for much of the past 30 years, probably with tuberculosis.

25X1B



2. His life expectancy is probably not much more than five years.

IV. Mao, however, appears to have chosen Lin to be his successor in spite of Lin's frailty. We think this must reflect Mao's growing mistrust of other elements of the leadership.

A. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the recent changes has been the break-up of the group of leaders which had been running the party machinery for the past decade.

1. Liu Shao-chi was the leading member of that group.

2. The General Secretary of the Party, Teng Hsiao-ping, is another leading member of that group. He has been weakened, but not as much as Liu.
3. A couple of months ago, in fact, Teng appeared to have gained in the shake-up. All that has changed. Teng is still in the inner circle of Mao's advisors, but he has slipped from third or fourth place to sixth place in the power structure.

B. In place of the party leaders, military leaders close to Lin, and government figures like Chou En-lai, have risen in importance.

V. For many years now, it had appeared to us that the leaders of the party machinery--men like Liu Shao-chi--enjoyed Mao's full trust.

A. They not only had a long record of personal loyalty to Mao; their radical approach was also in accord with his.

B. This situation presents us with a puzzling contradiction, especially in regard to its policy implications:

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Paradox

1. Mao is apparently intent on pushing through a radical program to reshape Chinese society. It appears to be so radical that the party rank-and-file could not be trusted to carry it out. The Red Guard had to be created.
2. There is, therefore, no satisfactory explanation for Mao's willingness to turn against his old comrades who appeared to share his radical views.
3. The government administrators and economic specialists who have been retained or even promoted--men like Chou En-lai, Chen Yun, and Li Fu-chan--are the relatively moderate members of the politburo.
4. Yet these moderates are now the men who presumably will be helping Mao and Lin Piao to implement the radical program.

VI. As I have said, the situation appears to be highly unstable. The events of the past ten months must have intensified the antagonisms and mistrust among those leaders who have survived the purge.

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- A. The possibility has increased that when Mao finally does go, the succession will be disorderly, and marked by factional struggles and bloody purges.
- B. It is also far from clear whether or not the new leaders are going to institute any major changes in domestic or foreign policy.
- C. There has, however, been no change in the basic hard-line nature of the men at the top. As a result, we foresee no abrupt change in Peking's policy of implacable hostility toward the United States.

(FOREIGN POLICY)

- I. In general, the Peking leaders have been so pre-occupied with troubles at home that they have been marking time on foreign policy.

Vietnam

- II. On Vietnam, Peking continues to repeat its familiar hard line. At the same time, the Chinese are carefully avoiding any expansion of their commitment to help the North Vietnamese.

~~SECRET~~

A. The first U. S. attacks on North Vietnam's POL storage facilities on June 29th provided a short-lived barrage of propaganda.

1. Peking tried to convey the impression that China was more determined than ever to assist Hanoi in resisting this new escalation.

2. But the Chinese declarations of "resolute support" for the Vietnamese did not exhibit the ring of enthusiasm that had marked similar statements on the subject a year ago. The emphasis was on self-reliance by the Vietnamese.

B. Peking, however, appears to be just as determined as ever that the North Vietnamese must continue the war.

1. After the September 7th meeting of the U.S. and Chinese Communist ambassadors in Warsaw, the Chinese Ambassador released a statement attacking what he called the "U.S. peace talks swindle." Ambassador Wang repeated that China would support Hanoi against the U. S. to the end.

~~SECRET~~

SECRET

- C. Those Chinese protests last week about recent violations of Chinese air space did not have any threats of counter-action. For all the bluster of Chinese propaganda, Peking's reaction to these incidents has been cautious.

Sino-Soviet Relations

III. The Sino-Soviet dispute has flared up again, but there is no indication that this marks a significant change in relations between the two countries.

- A. Mass demonstrations by Red Guards outside the Soviet Embassy in Peking on August 29th and 30th were evidently intended as a reply to a Soviet diplomatic note delivered on August 26th which had protested earlier "acts of hooliganism" committed by the Red Guards in the vicinity of the embassy.

1. The Chinese took care, however, to prevent the thousands of people who took part in the demonstrations from getting out of hand and damaging the Soviet Embassy.
2. This suggests Peking is not willing to push the Soviets too far.

SECRET

B. Peking's most recent blast at Moscow was a People's Daily article on September 8th, which accused Moscow of collaborating with the U. S. to "sell out the Vietnamese."

1. The article called the Soviets "renegades," "termites of the working class," and "scum in the revolutionary ranks."

C. Moscow has maintained a general posture of restraint, but the Soviet press is quoting liberally from criticism of China in the foreign Communist press. It has recently sharpened the tone of its own commentary on China.

1. In recent weeks, the Moscow papers have also re-printed some of the more extreme Chinese statements in connection with the Red Guard, to let the teen-age antics speak for themselves.

~~SECRET~~
NO FOREIGN DISSEM

20 September 1966

MAHON BRIEFING

THAILAND

- I. You may have noticed some press reports over the week-end to the effect that the Thai government had ended the secrecy over U. S. military operations in Thailand.
 - A. An American columnist, Richard Wilson, claimed he had been told by the Thai Deputy Defense Minister, Dawee, (Dah-WEE) that U. S. troops are participating in joint operations against the Communist insurgents in northeastern Thailand.
 - B. The Thai government in Bangkok has issued prompt and categorical denials of the Wilson story. We are inclined to believe that Dawee did not make the statement, and anyway the denial is correct.
 1. Prime Minister Thanom (Tah-NAWM) and his Deputy, General Praphat, (Prah-POT) have both made it clear to us that they feel the Thai forces can handle the insurgents.

2. The Thai government has specifically rejected any use of U. S. combat troops in the counter-insurgency effort.
3. We are, of course, giving them some advice and support for counter-insurgency.

II. The use of bases in Thailand for U. S. aircraft operating against the Vietnamese Communists remains an open secret---neither government has admitted it yet.

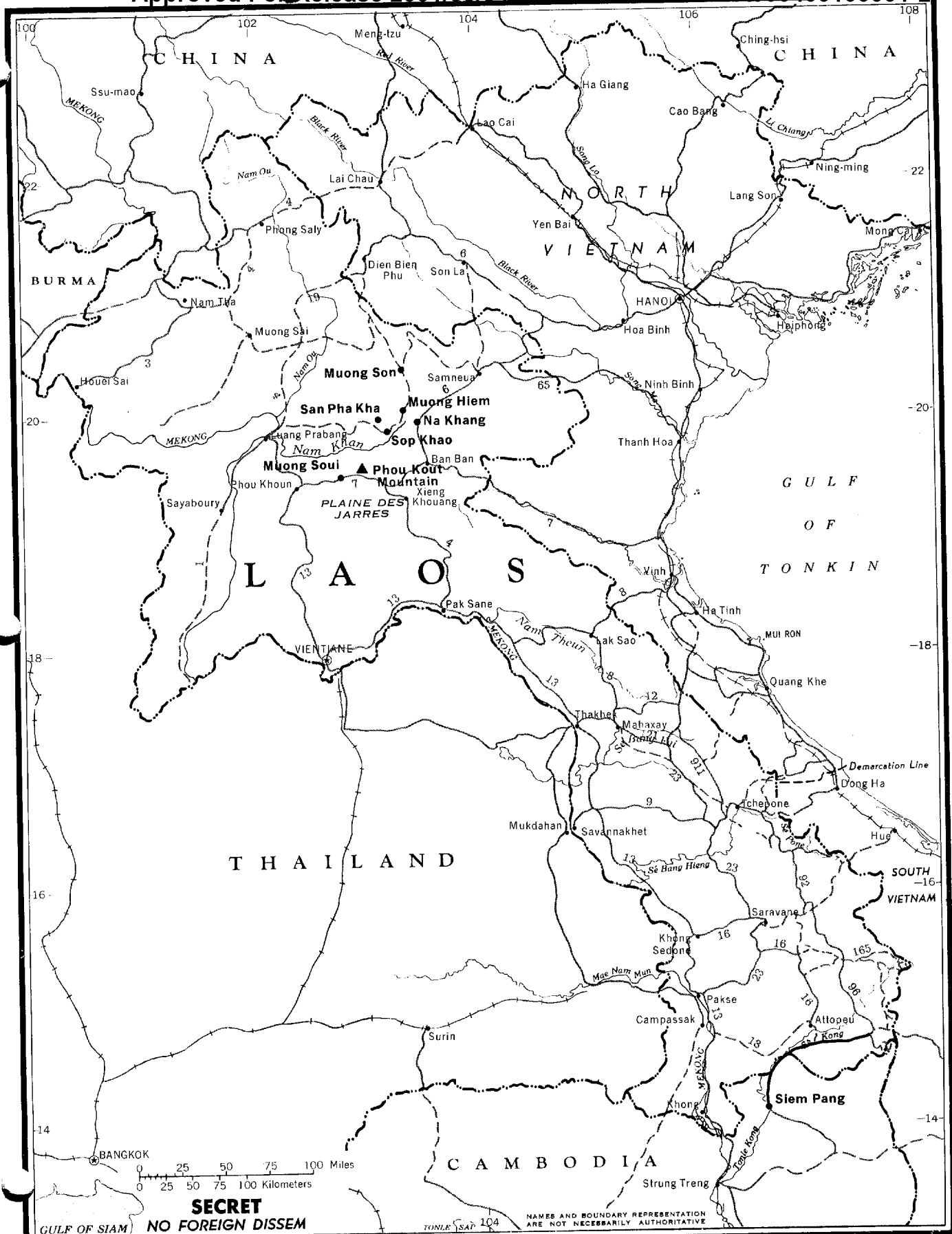
- A. All that has been admitted is that the U. S. has air bases in Thailand.

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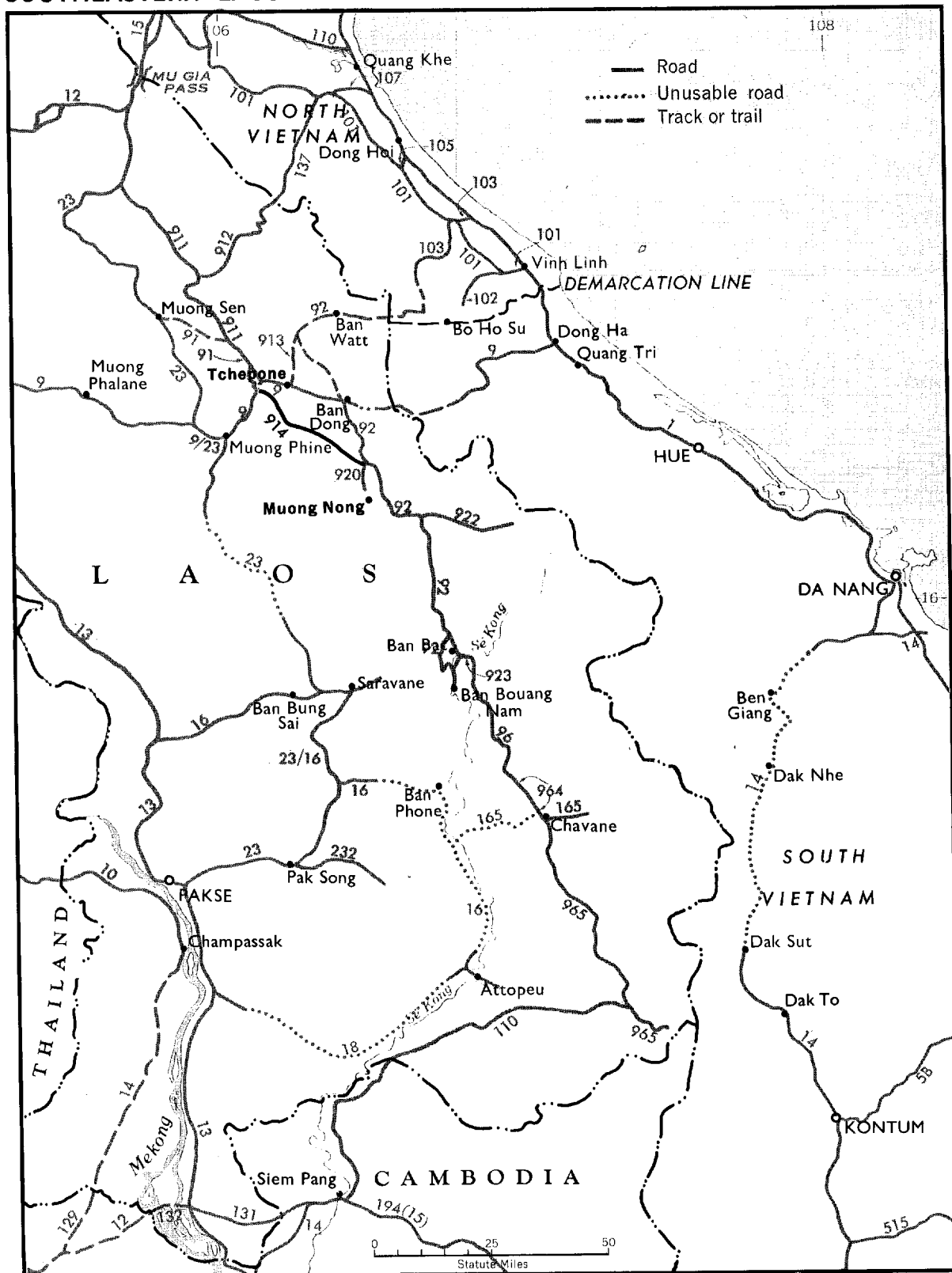
INTEL MEMO: 1595/66, 11 August:

/ COMMUNIST INSURGENCY IN THAILAND:
STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

12 July THAILAND briefing from Global Background Book



SOUTHEASTERN LAOS



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11 July LAOS Briefing from Global Background Book

12 July CAMBODIA, ditto

INDONESIA: 29 Aug [REDACTED] Briefing

STATINTL

15 Aug Memo for Congressman MAHON

13 July BURMA from Global Background Book